

# Section 2

## How to Gender Proof




## Five-Step Gender Proofing Process - Template

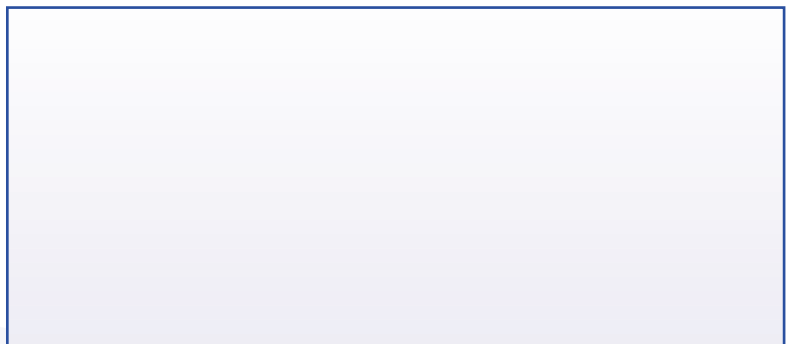
The Five-Step Gender Proofing Process is essentially a set of five questions which should be posed for any actions/objectives your organisation is planning to undertake. The answers to these questions should then be integrated into the appropriate sections of your organisation's strategic or operational planning document.

Answers to the question posed at Step One should be evident in any baseline or profile information produced.

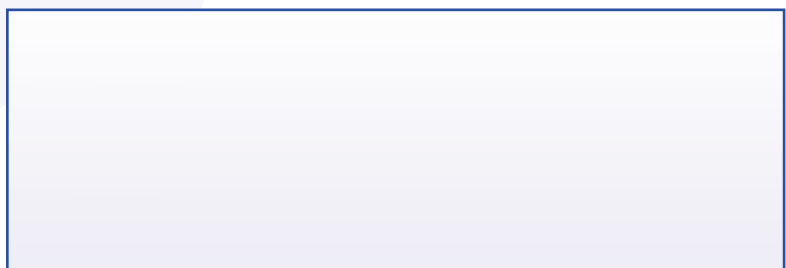
Objective/Action to be gender proofed:



Step 1: What are the different experiences and roles of men and women which might have an effect on how they benefit from/get involved in (objective/action...)?



Step 2: What are the implications of the differences (outlined above) for this objective?



Step 3: Given these implications, what do we need to do when pursuing this objective to ensure equality of outcome for men and women?

Step 4: Who will assume responsibility for ensuring these actions are carried out?

Step 5: How will we measure success in this area? (indicators, targets)

### Before you proof...

- Gather any available gender disaggregated statistics, facts and information on the issue being addressed by the action/objective. This will enable you to give an accurate response to Step One and to set realistic targets in Step Five.
- Consult with men and/or women in the target group to supplement your answer to step one.



## Five-Step Gender Proofing Process - Guidelines

In completing the template, consider the following:

- The questions have been developed to ensure that each stage of the process is considered in light of responses to the previous stage. Therefore although it may seem obvious, it is important to read through all the questions first, become familiar with each and ensure that when completing the template responses are to the immediate question only.
- It is crucial to retain the focus on gender throughout. Many people are much more familiar with the process of planning than with the process of proofing. Therefore there can be a temptation to work through the objective or action itself rather than focus on the gender dimension to the objective/action. It is the focus on the differences in the lives of men and women which distinguish the gender proofing process from a regular planning one and it is crucial to maintain this focus as you are working through the process.
- Include the objective to be gender proofed as part of the wording in Step 1 (as in the examples which follow). This will assist in retaining the focus on gender.
- The response to the first step will set the entire “gender agenda” for the implementation of the objective. It is important therefore to answer this question as accurately as possible. Where available, use local data and statistics. In the absence of local information, use national statistics or research reports. In some instances where statistical information is unavailable, you may have to rely on local knowledge. (For example, you may not have statistical information indicating that women are primary childcarers in your area. However, this need not prevent you from basing decisions on the commonly acknowledged feature of Irish society that women assume primary responsibility for child rearing). If you’re unsure, contact women’s or men’s groups who are likely to have given these issues consideration.
- Keep it simple! The differences in the lives of women and men, in particular those which contribute to inequalities, are part and parcel of everyday experiences. The solutions in themselves can often be simple, straightforward and based on a creative common sense approach to alleviating potential inequities.
- It is however acknowledged that the most obvious solutions can be the most difficult to implement. It is important therefore that you set realistic targets and adopt a phased approach to implementing a solution.

“Policies which reflect the realities of women’s lives will assist in enabling women to contribute fully to society and society as a whole will benefit from the skills women have to offer.”

*New Zealand Ministry  
for Women’s Affairs*

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- There will be times when issues identified in your area will require responses at national as well as local level. It may be necessary therefore to include actions which will help to effect change at both these levels.

SO OUR GENDER PROOFING SOLUTION CONSISTS OF AN ALTERNATING LEAVE SYSTEM, A LOTTERY – BASED COMPENSATION SCHEME, ELECTRO-MECHANICAL AIDS AND A COURSE OF HORMONE TREATMENTS

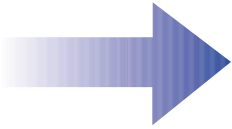


*keep it simple...*

- When there is little or insufficient information in a particular area, research or data collection may be needed to remedy this. In this case, completion of the process may have to await outcomes of the research.
- It can be helpful to break the objective down into a number of component parts. For example, if an objective is 'to develop a community resource centre', you could break the tasks into: establishment of the centre; recruitment of staff to manage and run it; targeting users; type of activities/information provided and publicising and promoting its use.

***On the following pages, sample templates are provided which have been completed by participants in the County Development Board Training Initiative referred to in the Introduction. The objectives / actions are taken from CDB Strategy documents, all of which were at draft stage at the time of training.***

## Completed Gender Proofing Forms - Sample I from CDB Training Session



**Sub Objective to be Gender Proofed:  
To provide training programmes to skill people in  
IT/technical support.**

**Step 1: What are the different experiences and roles of men and women which might have an effect on how they benefit from the provision of IT training programmes?**

- a) Men tend to be over represented at a senior level in business where there is less likely to be hands-on use of computers.
- b) Women are more likely to have keyboard skills, men are more likely to be uncomfortable with using a key-board.
- c) Women in organisations mainly use computers for administration purposes (WORD, Excel etc)
- d) Women assume child rearing responsibilities within the home.
- e) Men who work on farms tend not to get involved in adult/evening education.
- f) Many women see IT related jobs as 'male' occupations.

**Step 2: What are the implications of these differences for this objective?**

- a) Men in senior management will be less likely to apply to do the programme. 'Older' men at management levels are at a disadvantage. They sometimes fear computers... that they will 'lose information'.
- b) The starting point in terms of skills levels for men and women will be different.
- c) Women may need in-service training in maximising/expanding their use of IT within current jobs (internet use, accessing information etc.).
- d) Participation of women will be dependent on childcare support being made available in the form of crèche and/or financial assistance.
- e) Awareness raising needs to take into account the reluctance of men who will not normally come forward to participate in IT programmes.
- f) Women may not think IT training is relevant to them.

**Step 3: Given these, what do we need to do when pursuing this objective to ensure equality of outcome for men and women?**

- a) Promotion methods and recruitment need to be sensitive to the fact that men in senior positions may perceive their lack of computer knowledge as a weakness.
- b) Ensure training is tailor made to allow for the different starting points of women and men.
- c) Provide in-service training to expand the use of IT, thereby ensuring training does not re-enforce men and women's traditional use of computers, but is pro-active in stimulating wider use.
- d) Provide on site crèche and childcare allowances.
- e) Pay particular attention to promotion of IT among men. Promote availability of the programme in places where men are likely to be, such as sports clubs, pubs, marts etc..
- f) Be pro-active in targeting women - demystify IT and encourage women to participate. Consider initiatives relating to the way in which technology training for boys and girls is delivered at both national and secondary school levels.

**Step 4: Who will assume responsibility for ensuring these actions are carried out?**

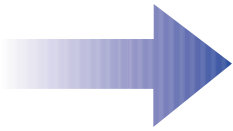
- Vocational Educational Committee, FAS, Teagasc, Area Based Partnership.

**Step 5: How will we measure success in this area? (indicators, targets)**

- Set targets relating to the level of uptake of training programmes including the numbers of women and men who successfully complete courses. (A baseline will need to be established to set appropriate targets initially).
- Monitor targets over time and adapt targets as appropriate.
- Analyse and monitor how people use training undertaken in the longer term and identify progression options.



## Completed Gender Proofing Forms - Sample II from CDB Training Session



**Sub Objective to be Gender Proofed:  
Develop geographically spread affordable workspace, in  
a range of sizes (and areas).**

**Step 1: What are the different experiences and roles of men and women which might have an effect on how they benefit from the development of geographically spread affordable workspace?**

- a) Women work in the home, managing people, finance, resources. They may lack confidence or self-belief in relation to enterprise. Women may have little experience of structured employment or of managing adults. Men have greater experience of structured employment and experience of risk taking within a work situation outside the home.
- b) Women assume primary responsibility for child rearing.
- c) Women are less likely to have transport available to them.
- d) Women are seen to be more vulnerable to physical attack.
- e) Women's prior experience of sourcing finance may have been negative.

**Step 2: What are the implications of these differences for this objective?**

- a) Women may not have the confidence to set up in business. Unless proactive measures are taken to address the lack of previous experience and/or confidence for women, they are unlikely to be in a position to avail of the workspace. Men are more likely, on the basis of previous experience, to avail of workspace.
- b) There is a need for childcare in the centre or immediate area to make it accessible to women.
- c) Without transport women are less likely to avail of the workspace.
- d) Issues of safety, in particular for women (as workspaces tend to be located in quiet locations on the outskirts of towns) may put women off using such spaces.
- e) Women may not have the confidence/skills to seek business loans.



**Step 3: Given these, what do we need to do when pursuing this objective to ensure equality of outcome for men and women?**

- a) Run 'start your own business' courses designed for, and targeted at, women.
- b) Provide on-site crèches for both workers and clients.
- c) Provide transport or ensure location is served by public transport.
- d) Ensure design is safety conscious i.e. lighting, personal security systems.
- e) Work with financial institutions such as Credit Unions and banks, with regard to interest rates, long term loans etc. and encourage them to adopt a gender sensitive approach in their work.

**Step 4: Who will assume responsibility for ensuring these actions are carried out?**

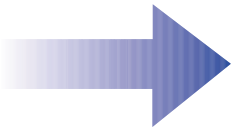
- County Development Board, Community Fora, Vocational Education Committee, Gardaí, County Council.

**Step 5: How will we measure success in this area? (indicators, targets)**

- Numbers of workspaces occupied on gender basis.
- Numbers of women and men employed in the workspaces.
- Number of women and men who undertook training.
- Number of businesses subsequently developed by men and women.



## Completed Gender Proofing Forms - Sample III from CDB Training Session



**Sub Objective to be Gender Proofed:  
Establish a working party to devise a strategy on job  
creation for the county.**

**Step 1: What are the different experiences and roles of men and women which might have an effect on how they participate on a working party to devise a job strategy for the county?**

- a) Women are less likely to have participated in (or held decision making roles in) working groups on job creation/economic development.
- b) Job creation is seen to be of more interest/concern to men.
- c) Women have primary responsibility for child-rearing.

**Step 2: What are the implications of these differences for this objective?**

- a) It will be more difficult for women to participate and be part of the decision making process.
- b) Men are likely to be targeted more than women to get involved in this working party and therefore there is likely to be imbalanced gender representation. Extra supports will be needed if women are to participate.
- c) Unless childcare needs are met, women are less likely to participate. If meetings are held at times children require attention (e.g. school pick-up times) women are less likely to be able to participate.

**Step 3: Given these, what do we need to do when pursuing this objective to ensure equality of outcome for men and women?**

- a) Build capacity with potential group members to enable them to participate.
- b) Need to have working group gender balanced or at least 60/40. Pro-active measures may need to be taken to ensure this happens. Identify and remove barriers to women participating in the working group - such as timing, venue, structure of meetings etc., and criteria for membership.
- c) Childcare needs of working group members must be met (this is likely to involve a combination of crèche provision and childcare allowance).

*Additional Actions*

- d) Gender-awareness training needs to be provided to create a forum for consideration of gender issues around the question of employment.

**Step 4: Who will assume responsibility for ensuring these actions are carried out?**

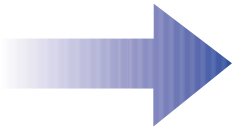
- Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Working Group, County Development Boards, Nominating Bodies.

**Step 5: How will we measure success in this area? (indicators, targets)**

- 60/40 gender balance on working group.
- Level of attendance and participation of both men and women.
- Numbers availing of childcare.
- Gender Awareness Training Course organised and well attended.



## Completed Gender Proofing Forms - Sample IV from CDB Training Session



Objective to be Gender Proofed:

**Develop an Interagency 'working group' on transport at county level (to include representatives from statutory, voluntary & community organisations).**

**Step 1: What are the different experiences and roles of men and women which might have an effect on how they participate in an inter-agency working group?**

- a) Women assume primary responsibility for childrearing.
- b) Men are more likely to be working outside the home.
- c) Women are less likely to have primary access to the family car.
- d) Men are over represented at senior decision making levels in statutory and voluntary organisations.
- e) Women are likely to have less experience at assuming public/representative roles and are therefore likely to be less confident in these roles.

**Step 2: What are the implications of these differences for this objective?**

- a) Unless childcare needs are met, women are less likely to participate. If meetings are held at times children require attention (e.g. school pick-up times) women are unlikely to be able to attend.
- b) Men and women may need meetings to be held at different times to facilitate their attendance.
- c) Unless transport provision is taken into account women may be unable to attend meetings.
- d) There may be an over representation of men in the working group, and a consequent lack of sufficient focus on women's issues/needs.
- e) Unless the working group uses methods which proactively facilitate the involvement of all members, it is likely that women's perspectives will not be fully articulated.

**Step 3: Given these, what do we need to do when pursuing this objective to ensure equality of outcome for men and women?**

- a) Childcare needs of working group members must be met (this is likely to involve a combination of crèche provision and childcare allowance).
- b) Hold meetings at times which suit both men and women - this may involve rotating the timing of meetings to ensure different needs are met over time.
- c) Provide transport (or meet transport costs for participants).
- d) Membership of the working group should be gender balanced (60/40). Sectoral representation should also be gender balanced and pro-active measures taken to address this if it falls short of the 60/40 guideline. Provide/promote training to encourage participation and to support post holders.
- e) Structure meetings in ways which use a variety of participation methods - for example small group work, individual reflection etc. to allow less confident members to participate fully.

**Step 4: Who will assume responsibility for ensuring these actions are carried out?**

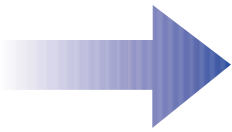
- Initiator / co-ordinator of the group in the first instance. Thereafter the group will need to agree the above as a way of working.

**Step 5: How will we measure success in this area? (indicators, targets)**

- Availability and uptake of childcare/eldercare.
- Gender balance of 60/40 achieved within 3 years.
- Gender balance of 60/40 within each sector.
- High degree (90%) of satisfaction expressed by members regarding timing and structure of meetings (information gathered using annual review/questionnaire).
- Participants state that they feel they contribute fully/equally within meetings.



## Completed Gender Proofing Forms - Sample V from CDB Training Session



Sub Objective to be Gender Proofed:

**That an accessible, multi-purpose Arts/Civic/Cultural Centre be established for the county.**

**Step 1: What are the different experiences and roles of men and women which might have an effect on how they benefit from the establishment of an arts/cultural centre? (In this example consider: the management of the centre; users of the centre; programme design and promotion).**

- a) Women have primary responsibility for looking after children.
- b) Men are more likely to be working 9a.m. - 5p.m.
- c) Women are generally less visible in the arts. Women artists & women in history and cultural fields are less well known.
- d) Men are more likely to have access to the family car. Women are the main users of public transport.

**Step 2: What are the implications of these differences for this objective?**

- a) Unless there is a crèche, many women will be unable to access the centre.
- b) Unless there are flexible opening hours (i.e. outside 9 - 5, Monday to Friday), men may be unable to access the centre.
- c) Because male artists are more well known, unless you proactively target women, programmes and use of gallery space may be imbalanced in favour of men.
- d) Getting to the facility might be difficult for some women.

**Step 3: Given these, what do we need to do when pursuing this objective to ensure equality of outcome for men and women?**

- a) Provide (subsidised) Crèche.
- b) Have flexible opening hours including evening and weekend opening.
- c) Programme must appeal to both men and women. It must also reflect both men and women's roles in, and contribution to, society. Challenge preconceived notions, host displays without role stereotyping (e.g. 'Fathers with Children' art competition).
- d) Choose a central location which is accessible by public transport.

*Additional Actions*

- e) Put gender proofing on the agenda of staff meetings and regularly review proofing targets.

**Step 4: Who will assume responsibility for ensuring these actions are carried out?**

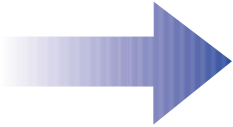
- Implementing agency.
- All centre staff, primarily managers.

**Step 5: How will we measure success in this area? (indicators, targets)**

- Monitor the numbers of women and men using the centre.
- Encourage users to provide feedback which will be taken into account in future planning.
- 60/40 gender balance in management posts.
- Programme reflects a healthy gender balance and presents positive and challenging images of women and men.
- Gender proofing is a standing agenda item at all Centre meetings.



## Completed Gender Proofing Forms - Sample VI from CDB Training Session



Sub Objective to be Gender Proofed:

**That educational bursaries in the arts and cultural activities be made available to artists in the county.**

**Step 1: What are the different experiences and roles of men and women which might have an effect on how they benefit from the provision of educational bursaries? (In this example consider: how information is disseminated; criteria for assessment of applications; how to encourage applications from a wide range of people).**

- a) Men and women access information differently (for example women are more likely to listen to local radio, men are more likely to read newspapers).
- b) Male artists have a higher profile in the arts world.
- c) Women's art is not always seen as 'art' - for example, tapestry or lacemaking.

**Step 2: What are the implications of these differences for this objective?**

- a) A variety of information dissemination methods are required if men and women are to be well informed.
- b) Selection criteria used are more likely to reflect the fact that male artists have a higher profile.
- c) Women's art may not be valued.



**Step 3: Given these, what do we need to do when pursuing this objective to ensure equality of outcome for men and women?**

- a) Target information using a variety of methodologies - and be creative! (think about when and where women and men meet - libraries, pubs, sports venues etc.).
- b) & c) Seek advice on the selection criteria, ensuring a broad view/definition of art is used and that the entire application process reflects the range of artistic endeavours of both men and women.

*Additional Actions*

- d) Ensure a gender balance on the selection committee.
- e) Ring-fence money for targeting under the represented group (men or women) as required.

**Step 4: Who will assume responsibility for ensuring these actions are carried out?**

- The organisation offering the bursary and selecting the candidates.

**Step 5: How will we measure success in this area? (indicators, targets)**

- If there is not a baseline, set a 60/40 gender target for provision of bursaries.
- Level of applications received from both genders.
- Equal balance of men and women on selection committee.
- Evaluate any remedial actions undertaken to see if they have successfully met their aims.



## Key Points to consider

In the course of the training initiative which led to the development of the materials in this Handbook, a number of issues arose which should be taken into consideration in the delivery of similar initiatives in the future.

- Key to the success of gender proofing training is the ability to convey the relevance of the issue to men as well as women. Because gender inequality impacts much more significantly on women than on men, one might be led to believe that women will be the only sex to gain from investment in gender proofing. However, there is increasing awareness that gender inequalities in society also have an adverse - albeit different - effect on men. Gender proofing enables us to focus on these effects in addition to focusing on the effects of inequality on women. Making the issue relevant and beneficial to all participants is central to participants' willingness to engage with the issue. It is therefore useful to include information on the way in which society is structured which has less favourable outcomes for men and highlight how proofing can result in actions to remedy these situations.
- Participation at senior management level and representation on public decision making bodies are areas where the greatest disparities exist between men and women. When focusing on the importance of redressing the imbalances in these areas, it is important that the focus is on providing **options** and enabling people to make choices. Failure to do this could result in the purpose being mis-interpreted. It is important therefore to affirm the following:
  - The importance of having women in decision making positions and occupying senior posts within organisations does not in any way place a value judgement on those who occupy those positions vis-à-vis those who remain in lower grade occupations. If women choose to remain in low or lower grades, this is of course perfectly acceptable. The rationale for gender proofing lies in the removal of barriers so those in low or lower grades have the **option** of progressing if they so choose.
  - Similarly, this focus on enhancing women's political and economic status does not place a value judgement on women who choose to work in the home. It is all too possible to underestimate the contribution made to society by women who work in the home and to inadvertently undermine the crucial role played by them. However, the important point is that women in the home should be there because they choose to be.

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- Increased representation of women in decision making positions must be based on merit. Gender proofing is concerned with removing the barriers which may prevent women from applying for more senior positions. These barriers are frequently related to family responsibilities and do not exist to the same extent for male counterparts. Gender proofing advocates the removal of those barriers thereby enabling women to compete on an equal basis. Following the removal of barriers, appointments subsequently made will be on the basis of merit.
- The importance of disaggregated data cannot be underestimated. Completing the gender proofing template in the absence of such data may result in over dependence on perception and speculation. This can result in differences of opinion and failure to agree on a starting point (especially so where there is resistance to the process of gender proofing). Also, it is very difficult to set targets and indicators in the absence of baseline information.

## Conclusion

The implementation of an effective gender proofing strategy will result in an honest appraisal of the differences in the lives we lead, a recognition and acknowledgement of those differences and subsequently, a tailor made response in our policies and practices. Difference and diversity in itself is healthy - the gender proofing process, when effectively implemented, ensures that these differences do not contribute to an unequal power relationship in society between women and men.

